

protection of non-smokers and encouraging smokers to quit.

A 1995 law, poorly respected, restricts smoking in public places. Health institutions are drawing up action plans to make their premises smoke-free, and information posters and signs are being distributed. Counselling services and information for smokers encourage and support quitting, and leaflets for non-smokers give advice on how to help.

A public information campaign has also begun, with spots on state and private television, radio jingles, and billboards urging smokers to quit. On national No Smoking Day at the end of January, hoards of smokers exchanged their cigarettes for fruit at a large tent in central Belgrade.

Halting the tidal wave of smoking induced illness that seems set to engulf Serbia in the next few decades seems a tough order. But in a country battered and impoverished by economic flux, conflict, and political instability, tobacco control seems the only prescription.

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USA: Big Tobacco and the lighter side of security

One of the more bizarre accounts of the tobacco industry's influence on the Bush administration in the USA emerged recently from Michael Moore, film maker, journalist, and best selling author of the satirical and less than flattering book about his country, *Stupid white men*. Moore revealed that during a nationwide book promotion tour, he had asked his audiences if they knew the answer to a question that was increasingly bothering him. As he flew from city to city, he repeatedly passed through airport security checks. At each one, he dutifully emptied his pockets of anything that might be considered a potential security threat, in the climate of greatly increased security awareness following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

Penknives, nail files, knitting needles, even toenail clippers were among the long list of items prohibited in hand baggage, yet Moore noticed that cigarette lighters and matches were not—even after a British passenger, on 22 December that same year, unsuccessfully tried to set fire to his shoes with a lighter, shoes whose heels were packed

with explosives, police said later. Did anyone know, Moore asked his audiences, why on earth cigarette lighters, one of which had already been used in an attempted suicide bomb attack high over the Atlantic, were missing from such a comprehensive security list, especially since smoking was now prohibited on all flights?

Moore finally got his answer at an event in a bookshop in Arlington, Virginia, just a few miles from the Pentagon, target of one of the hijacked aircraft in the 11 September attacks. As Moore signed copies of his book after giving his talk, a young man approached him, introduced himself, and said in a lowered voice that he could answer the question, as he worked on Capitol Hill, centre of the federal government administration in Washington DC. Butane lighters were on the original list prepared by the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) and sent to the White House for approval, he said, but the tobacco industry successfully lobbied the Bush administration to have lighters and matches removed from the banned list.

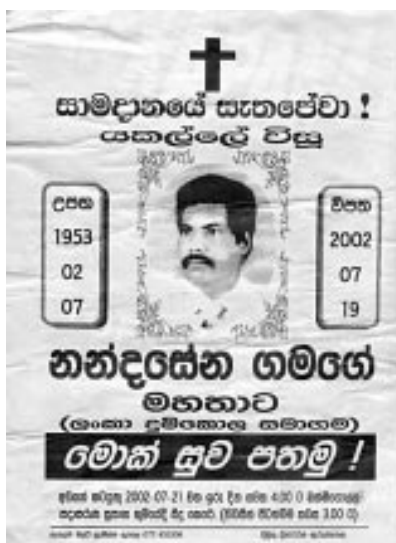
Perhaps the industry's rationale was not just based on concern for their customers, many of whom would want to smoke again as soon as possible after a flight, preferably without having to buy another lighter. They may also have feared the association of smoking paraphernalia with potential instruments of

death, another inch lost on the slippery slope of social acceptability. Even more interesting, maybe it had occurred to them that if smokers did not immediately light up on arrival, some might get all the way to their destinations without smoking at all—and then what? They might even seize the opportunity to give up for good.

Michael Moore has filed a demand under the Freedom of Information Act, asking the FAA to provide him with all relevant documentation about the decisions that were made to allow butane lighters and matches on board passenger aircraft. Don't hold your breath waiting for a full and frank response, Mr Moore.

Sri Lanka: film's big puff for smoking

Product placement of cigarettes in movies is nothing new, though for a time, following the publication of hard evidence of tobacco companies' efforts to get their cigarettes into popular movies in the hands of young people's screen idols, there was a temporary reduction in this insidious form of promotion. It has crept back again, of course, if with a little more subtlety than before. In Sri Lanka, though, an extraordinarily overt promotion of smoking was a major and continuing theme in a recent box office success, whose Sinhala name *Thani thatuven piyabana* translates as *Flying with one wing*.



The death notice of the late Mr Nandasena Gamage, who worked for BAT's Sri Lankan subsidiary, CTC, as a tobacco quality taster. Earlier this year, Mr Gamage died after contracting lung cancer, leaving a widow and two children, one of them disabled. After his death, CTC reportedly paid compensation to his family, who have since declined to speak to journalists about their tragedy.



The Sri Lankan film, *Flying with one wing*, overtly promotes smoking.

The main character in the film is a woman who lives the life of a man. "He" smokes throughout the film, saying that smoking is one of the characteristics of masculinity. Other scenes seem to have the express purpose of promoting smoking—a girl who tells her boyfriend, who has put out his cigarette when she arrives, "Why did you put out your cigarette? I like men who smoke"; and a doctor who offers

his patients cigarettes during consultations. Despite the fact that the director is well known for including smoking in his work, the sheer weight of it in the film generated heated debate in the press.

A group of medical students complained about it, noting that the brand smoked was always Gold Leaf, a higher priced BAT brand. A journalist responded that they had failed to see the way smoking, so far a predominantly male habit in Sri Lanka, was being used to highlight issues raised in the film about definitions and cultural expectations of manhood and masculinity. Whatever the director's intentions, no one seems to doubt the saturation of smoking in a film that has been packing them in all over Sri Lanka. Many insist it was irresponsible of the director and that it will play a part, however small, in perpetuating the social acceptability of the habit. Those who know about tobacco industry promotional tactics are deeply suspicious of how Gold Leaf got there. For them, *Flying with one wing* would have been better named *Gasping with one lung*.

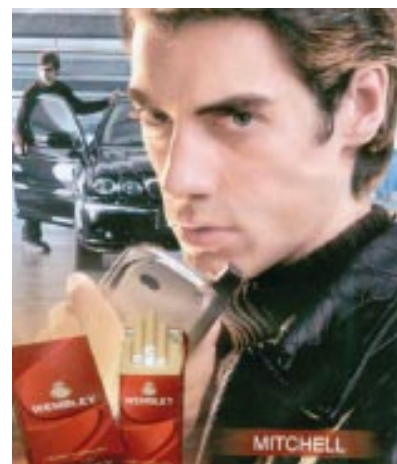
Pakistan: still room for brand launches

As recent issues of *Tobacco Control* have illustrated, Pakistan continues to be blitzed by tobacco promotion, much of it from PTC, the local subsidiary of BAT (see *Tobacco Control* 2002;11:294–5). Despite both the quantity and type of promotions used, which would have been unthinkable in the UK—BAT's

home country—even before the recent advertising ban there, the company has nevertheless been trying to present itself as socially responsible. Apart from its cigarette brand promotions, BAT has been running a series of newspaper ads apparently aimed primarily at opinion leaders, to try to position itself not only as socially responsible, but as vitally important to Pakistan's economy. Some of the "achievements" boasted about in these ads include the planting of over 24 million trees, providing a mobile dispensary for treating 3000 patients free of charge every month, and educating young people at computer learning resource centres.

The government has given conflicting signals about whether it will act to ban tobacco promotion. Meanwhile, the prevalence of smoking is already more than 40% among men and 8% among women. Not only is there already a large market to play for, but with a burgeoning middle class and changing aspirations of women, cigarette companies must be slaving at the thought of the millions still waiting to be recruited. There is clearly still room in this expanding market for new brand launches, as Philip Morris's subsidiary Lakson Tobacco demonstrated recently with its new brand, Wembley. Ads featured models who looked hardly out of their teens, adorned with the usual youth magnet trappings, such as mobile telephones and fast cars.

Not surprisingly, the results of so much tobacco promotion over so many years are already being seen in Pakistan's cancer clinics and cardiovascular

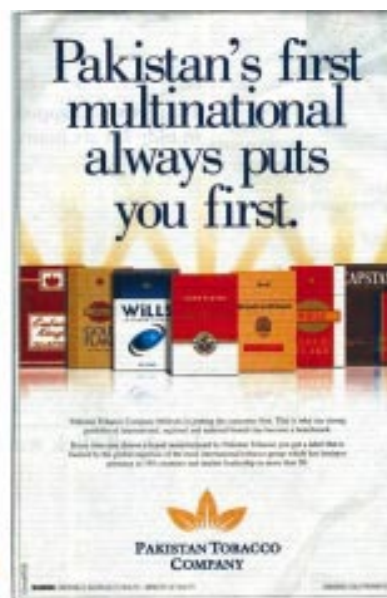
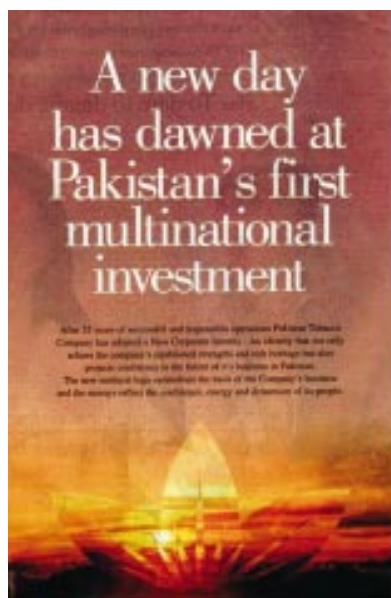


Advertisement for the cigarette brand Wembley, launched recently in Pakistan, clearly targeting the youth market.

intensive care units. The hard pressed doctors who work long hours trying to treat the victims of this needless epidemic are now nearing desperation in their constant pleas to their government to take effective action.

Uruguay: ants versus elephants

Earlier this year, one of the leading cigarette manufacturers seemed to be making special efforts to exploit the advantages afforded by hesitant public policies and the absence of serious controls on the publicity and sale of tobacco in Uruguay. In the capital, Montevideo, a new advertising campaign appeared for Montana cigarettes, using large posters in almost all



Series of newspaper ads run by BAT in Pakistan, promoting itself as a socially responsible company, vital to the country's economy.